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Letter dated 3 October 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith an aide-memoire from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Sudan to the United Nations on access for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and United Nations agencies to all areas in Darfur (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Omer Dahab Fadl **Mohamed**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 3 October 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Access for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and United Nations agencies to all areas in Darfur

Aide-memoire

The present aide-memoire is circulated by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Sudan to the United Nations to provide much-needed information and updates on access to Darfur for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which was deployed in 2007, and for other United Nations agencies. During the course of 2015 and until the end of September 2016, the issues of visas and the customs clearance of items imported by UNAMID, especially imports of foodstuff, took prominence in the successive reports of UNAMID and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to the Security Council. Now, having addressed those issues satisfactorily, thanks to the operationalization of the joint working mechanism that, together with the joint working group, had been delayed on the ground and in New York for a considerable amount of time, the issue of access is presently being continually hammered on and emphasized. This would definitely and adversely impact on meaningful negotiations on the exit of the mission from Darfur, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1769 (2007). The agreement reached by the joint working group, comprising the Government of the Sudan, UNAMID and the African Union, on a gradual and sequential exit was vetoed in New York. On 30 September 2016, only four days before the Council reviewed the periodic report of the Secretary-General on UNAMID (S/2016/812), the Department issued a "fact sheet for the Council on access restrictions". Usually, the report of the Secretary-General is the one on which the Council deliberates. Moreover, the "fact sheet" on access was issued one day after Amnesty International had released its report on allegations of the use of chemical weapons by the Sudan Armed Forces in Darfur from January to September 2016. Amnesty International cited denial of access as a reason why UNAMID had been unable to report on the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Darfur. The purported connection cannot go unnoticed. A United Nations spokesperson said on 29 September 2016, in reply to a question about the Amnesty International report, that such allegations made in the report were not mentioned in the successive reports of UNAMID, but he added that the Government of the Sudan had denied access to the areas in question.

The allegations by Amnesty International, concocted mainly by a reckless adventurous staffer of the organization who had served in UNAMID in 2011 as a political officer while obtaining his law degree, were based on sheer hearsay gathered remotely from outside the Sudan and by interviewing selected "victims". Nobody could tell how he managed to selectively obtain their cell phone numbers and how he came into possession of the photos of the victims of the attacks. The Amnesty International report, as naive and sensational as it is, deserves nothing but to be ignored. That is why the present aide-memoire addresses factually the issue of access in disregard of any ensuing opportunistic allegations by some international non-governmental organizations.

We would like hereunder to provide concrete evidence showing that access was permitted to all areas in Darfur during the past nine months of 2016, in rebuttal to the claims of denial:

(a) Incidents of denial of access, based on compelling security justifications, do not exceed an average of three cases per month, compared with around 8,000 patrols by UNAMID forces each month;

(b) UNAMID conducted visits to the main areas of Jebel Marra at the level of the Deputy Joint Special Representative and the chiefs of UNAMID sectors in Central Darfur;

(c) According to the UNAMID report, in the first 11 weeks of 2016, a total of 19,417 patrols were conducted by the military personnel of UNAMID, comprising 6,330 routine patrols, 7,318 short-range patrols, 442 long-range patrols, 2,281 night patrols, 344 humanitarian escorts and 2,702 logistics and administrative escorts covering 6,133 villages and 2,087 displacement camps. In addition, the Mission's police personnel conducted 8,323 patrols, compared with 7,359 in 2015, including 4,199 patrols to respond to the security needs of internally displaced persons, particularly women and children;

(d) According to the recent report of the Secretary-General on UNAMID, which covers the period from 15 June to 15 September 2016, the number of patrols conducted by UNAMID was 22,298 of 22,365 requests, or 99 per cent completion;

(e) In Sortony, North Darfur, UNAMID police reinforced its military and police presence to conduct day and night patrols in order to maintain security and law and order near camps for internally displaced persons, making maximum use of the 2,531 peacekeepers and 71 armoured personnel carriers deployed (237 troops and 6 armoured personnel carriers in Sortony; 420 troops and 8 armoured personnel carriers in Kabkabiya; 435 troops and 9 armoured personnel carriers in Zalingei; 377 troops and 15 armoured personnel carriers in Nertiti; and 363 troops and 12 armoured personnel carriers in Tawila). In addition, UNAMID leadership actively engaged with the authorities on the crisis in Jebel Marra;

(f) As the United Nations responded to the situation in Jebel Marra, Anka, Mouli and Umtajock together, close coordination was maintained and an appropriate distinction and division of roles and responsibilities was made between the humanitarian organizations operating under the leadership of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNAMID, particularly with respect to the provision of logistical support and security to humanitarian operations;

(g) The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that it was engaged in ongoing discussions with authorities to undertake assessments in Nertiti, Thur and Wadi Boor. The Office added that seven requests to deliver aid and make assessments had been approved, including the visit of the Humanitarian Coordinator to Tawila on 22 February. In addition, according to the Office, as far as North Darfur State is concerned, access has not been an issue;

(h) The joint country team-UNAMID mission to Golo was conducted in the beginning of August;

(i) The Deputy Joint Special Representative of UNAMID for Protection, Bintou Keita, informed the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan on 30 August 2016 that she had travelled to all Darfur States and met different communities inside and outside the camps for internally displaced persons. They all demanded the provision of basic services, comprising health, water and education, with an emphasis on the latter;

(j) Mrs. Keita confirmed that UNAMID was currently in a better position regarding access, which should be "unfettered and complete at all times in the entire region of Darfur in accordance with its mandate";

(k) The United States Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan visited North Darfur State and Jebel Marra in Central Darfur beginning on 26 July 2016. The visits were completed as he requested, without exception;

(l) In addition, and within the entire period from January to September 2016, UNAMID military personnel, UNAMID leaders, humanitarian agencies, United Nations entities, including the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations country team, toured Darfur, especially the Jebel Marra area, which had witnessed fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid rebel movement resulting in the dislodging of the latter from its strongholds in the mountains;

(m) Moreover, the displaced people who had fled Jebel Marra during the fighting, estimated as more than 102,000 by UNAMID, were received in East and North Darfur States, where services and protection were provided. They all looked in good health, with the exception of some children who were suffering from the effects of the high temperature in the lowlands of Northern Darfur. Difficulties relating to water supply, poor roads and sanitation were reported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.